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Reagan Cracks Down on Sensitive Leaks to Media

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WASHINGTON—President Reagan, deplored leaks of classified information as "a problem of major proportions," Tuesday ordered restrictions on government employees' contacts with reporters and vowed to use "all legal methods" to find the sources of such leaks.

The President banned federal employees from "all contacts with any element of the news media in which classified National Security Council matters or classified intelligence information are discussed," unless such contacts are approved in advance by "a senior official."

Reagan had been fretting for some time over leaks of government information, according to White House sources, and was especially irked in recent days by news reports of an Administration decision against selling advanced fighter planes to Taiwan.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon said Deputy Defense Secretary Frank C. Carlucci and a number of other defense officials have taken lie detector tests as part of an inquiry into leaks to the Washington Post concerning a meeting of the Defense Resources Board on Thursday.

Among other things, the meeting was concerned with a secret report dealing with a potential \$750-billion gap in the Administration's five-year defense spending program. Henry E. Catto Jr., assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, said Tuesday in response to inquiries that Carlucci "put the word out that everyone who was at the meeting was invited to take a polygraph test, and most of them have done so."

Members of the Defense Resources Board include the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the four service secretaries and a number of assistant secretaries of defense, as well as Carlucci.

The White House Tuesday issued three documents relating to the National Security Council and intelligence information: a statement by Reagan outlining his concern and the directive he issued to tighten secrecy around classified information; a statement by William P. Clark, his

setting out the details of the recently reorganized National Security Council, now headed by Clark, who reports directly to the President. Other Presidents have expressed concern about leaks of classified information. But Reagan's response, including the restrictions he has placed on media contacts, is the most stringent since the "plumbers" unit was formed at the Nixon White House in the 1970s. That unit engaged in wiretapping, burglary and other illegal acts to find the source of leaks, and it became part of the Watergate scandal.

In his statement Tuesday, Reagan stressed that "legal methods" would be employed in any investigation of leaks.

"The government's lack of success in identifying the sources of unauthorized disclosure of classified National Security Council information and documents of classified intelligence information must be remedied and appropriate disciplinary measures taken," he said.

"Legal Methods" Pledged

"Henceforth, in the event of unauthorized disclosure of such information, government employees who have had access to that information will be subject to investigation, to include the use of all legal methods."

To limit access to such information and to ensure an accurate record of those who have had access, Reagan said, the number of officials with access will be kept to "the minimum essential to the orderly conduct of the government's business."

If a government employee does have a media contact after the approval of a senior official, Reagan said, an administrative memorandum will be prepared as soon as possible after the contact, "recording the subjects discussed and all information provided to the media representatives."

David R. Gergen, the chief White House spokesman, briefing the press on Reagan's directive, said the Administration has not yet worked out which senior officials will be authorized to approve contacts with the media.

Nor has the White House defined "all legal means" that might be used in an investigation of leaks. But they undoubtedly would include the use of lie detectors and court-authorized wiretaps.